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AUTHOR	Kigotho, Mutuota
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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of literacy among secondary school students. Increasing secondary school students' awareness of the structure of fables could help them improve their narrative writing competence in English. In a control and experimental group design, the researcher carried out an intervention where the experimental group received instruction on narrative structure while the control group was uninterrupted. Preliminary data involving 177 lower secondary school students in Kenya suggests that prior to the intervention, most of students wrote narratives that had similar shortcomings and similar strengths. However after a six week intervention period students that received instruction on narrative structure wrote more coherent and elaborate narratives than those students that had not received similar instruction suggesting that teachers could use an awareness of narrative structure to enhance narrative writing competence in English. Contains 30 references and 2 figures. (Author/RS)

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By Mutuota Kigotho

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RELATING THE STRUCTURE OF THE ORAL NARRATIVE TO LITERACY

MUTUOTA KIGOTHO

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES –(ACES)

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

SYDNEY NSW 2109

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of literacy among secondary school students. Increasing secondary school students' awareness of the structure of fables could help them improve their narrative writing competence in English. In a control and experimental group design, the researcher carried out an intervention where the experimental group received instruction on narrative structure while the control group was uninterrupted. Preliminary data involving 177 lower secondary school students in Kenya suggests that prior to the intervention, most of students wrote narratives that had similar shortcomings and similar strengths. However after a six week intervention period students that received instruction on narrative structure wrote more coherent and elaborate narratives than those students that had not received similar instruction suggesting that teachers could use an awareness of narrative structure to enhance narrative writing competence in English.

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1.0 Introduction

The problem of learning to write in school is a little like learning a sport (e.g. tennis) entirely with couching and no play. It is all well and good for an expert instructor to teach the fine points of proper strokes and strategy and to make observations from the sidelines, but unless this instruction is supplemented by actual interaction with a real player on the other side of the net, it is likely to remain abstract, hypothetical and unrealized. (-Nystrand, 1997, p.96).

To paraphrase Nystrand (1997) quoted above playing effective tennis requires regular training and constant practice. As in playing a game of tennis, learning-to write is a difficult and complex task that requires training and regular and constant practice. Both children and adults find the process of learning to write intellectually and physically demanding. In spite of this difficulty, learners and their teachers are faced with the daunting task of being required to write texts that are coherent and articulate. Part of the primary tasks of language teachers is to assist pupils generate, organize and order the contents of a text (Riley and Reedy, 2000; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Fleckenstein, 1992; Bruner, 1990). A written text manifests itself in the form of exposition, argumentation, explanation, description and narration. This paper presents evidence suggesting that children who receive instruction in narrative structure write narratives that are coherent and structured. The narratives also employ more cohesive elements than narratives written by children who have not received similar instruction.

The task of composing a structured and articulate narrative text calls to bear on the students' cognitive abilities. Yet knowledge about narrative structure is implicit among the pupils from a very early age. Bartlett (1932) posits that from an early age, children usually have an implicit knowledge of how narratives are structured. This paper poses the question 'would a teacher intervention assist in reactivating children's passive knowledge of narrative structure and make it explicit or active?' This study investigates the place of narrative structure in the composing process and then examines the relationship between coherence and cohesion in determining writing quality.

1.1 Background

The task of producing a written text overwhelms both children and adults. Empirical studies about writing suggest that writers come in two categories –expert and inexpert writers. In addressing the difficulty of producing a written text, there has been significant research focusing on the nature of the composing process (Flower and Hayes, 1980; Beaugrande, 1984; Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1982, 1986). The teaching of writing needs to take into account the findings of empirical research that shed light on what is involved in the writing process.

1:2 Implicit and explicit knowledge and the composing process

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Implicit knowledge refers to what a child already knows although that child might not be aware of such knowledge. This means that implicit knowledge belongs to the passive part of a child's mind. Research on language suggests that the most important kind of knowledge about language is implicit knowledge (Richmond, 1990; Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1982, 1986). For instance, Richmond (1990, p.27) posits that 'language is such a complex network of meaning and symbols'. How children associate meaning to the symbols they see in a text in the course of language learning has always been a major area of concern for language teachers. To develop its own language competence, the brain is expected to remember, select, sort, extrapolate, generalize and draw on its own experience. The question to be addressed would be- 'would a teacher intervention assist in making active a child's implicit knowledge hence making it explicit?' Richmond (1990) implies that such an undertaking is possible and suggests additional work for the language teacher stating-

'For teachers this means providing a classroom environment which supports and affirms the child's achievements, while continually proposing activities calling forth greater powers of articulation and understanding' (Richmond, 1990 p. 27).

1.3 Bereiter and Scardamalia's 'From conversation to writing' model of composing

Implicit knowledge has also been referred to as 'conceptual knowledge that children already have' (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1982). The two researchers posit that when children are confronted with a writing task, they have problems coping with the shift from conversation to writing. The research acknowledges the difficulty of this task arguing that the shift from conversation to writing is caused primarily by the absence of turn taking.

'Merely learning to keep language production going in the absence of a turn taking partner is a difficult accomplishment. Even more problematic is learning to activate and search appropriate memory stores in the absence of continual flow of prompts that normally comes from conversation' (p. 3).

Further challenges pointed out by the study by Bereiter and Scardamalia include the fact that the children have to think of what to say (content), they have to stay on topic, produce a coherent text, as well as make choice appropriate to an audience not immediately present. The current research will investigates whether an intervention by the language teacher by way of offering instruction about narrative structure might assist children overcome some of these difficulties associated with the development of writing skills.

1.4. Flower and Hayes (1981) model of the composing process

In dealing with the written composition, a major question posed by the composing research is 'What goes on in the mind as people compose?' Researchers, (for instance Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1986) have suggested that the model that offers the most explicit account of the mental operations is the model of the composing process suggested by Hayes and Flower (Flower and Hayes, 1981, Hayes and Flower, 1980a, 1980b). There has been significant research citing this model (Cooper and Holzman, 1983; North 1987; Hartley, 1991) and so the model will be discussed below.

According to the model proposed by Hayes and Flower (1981), the main parts of the composing process are planning, translating, and reviewing. The heart of planning is generating ideas most of which are ideas for what to write. These are culled and arranged to create a plan that controls the process of actual text production, which is called translating. Some of the general ideas, however, are ideas for goals to be pursued and these are stored for consultation throughout the composing process.

Emphasizing the importance of planning, Flower and Hayes (1981: p.372) state that planning is the consideration of content in a broad sense of 'forming an internal representation of the knowledge that will be used in writing'. Following Flower and Hayes, (1981), Riley and Reedy (2000 p. 10) break planning into sub-

sections

- generating ideas or the search of the memory bank for relevant ideas
- organizing ideas, which involves setting the ideas into a coherent structure
- goal setting, by which Flower and Hayes mean the ongoing process whereby ideas are generated and the writing shapes to accommodate them. 'Refining one's goals is not limited to the "pre writing stage " ... but is intimately bound up with the on-going, moment to moment process of composing' (1981 : p. 373)

From these observations, it would appear that planning might be an essential aspect of the writing process. The writing process also requires the writer to translate and review the content of what they write. Translating involves the transference of ideas to paper, while reviewing consists of the two sub-processes of evaluating and revising of the written content (Flower and Hayes, 1981).

The composing model proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981) offers useful insights into the composing process. Riley and Reedy appear to support the model although they state that the model 'does not encompass a notion or may differ from culture to culture'. The strength of this model lies in its claim to account for the amazing diversity of mental events during composition on the relatively small number of such sub-processes. Writing a coherent narrative requires that the writer is able to compose a text, and at the same time write a narrative that meets the requirements of that particular genre (Martin and Rothery, 1987; Riley and Reedy, 2000).

1.5 Scardamalia and Bereiter knowledge telling and knowledge transforming model of composing

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) propose two contrasting models distinguishing mature and immature composing. This research argues that the principal distinction between the two forms of composing lies in how knowledge is brought into the writing process and what happens to knowledge in that process. The proposed models have been identified as the knowledge telling and knowledge transforming. A major implication of the contrasting models is that knowledge transforming effect is not a universal property of writing but is the result of certain complex problem solving procedures that form part of one writing and are absent from the other.

Knowledge telling

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) identify knowledge telling as a way to generate text content, given a topic to write about and a familiar genre such as factual exposition, expressing a personal opinion or receiving instruction. In knowledge telling the writer constructs some representation of the assignment. Then topic and genre identifiers are located. These topic identifiers serve as cues for memory search and these cues automatically prime associated concepts. Thus information in memory becomes available for use in composition through a process of spreading activation. Given below is a graphic representation of the process of the knowledge telling composing model.

Explaining this composing model, Scardamalia and Bereiter posit that when a writer is engaged in knowledge telling, the mind is preoccupied with telling what is available in the mind rather that what has been carefully thought out. Such an activity does not cater for well-formedness, a basic requirement in text coherence.

Knowledge transforming

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) presented the knowledge-transforming model presented in figure 2 below, to represent mature writing. This model considers writing as a complex problem-solving process involving high order reasoning and the presentation of logical and coherent text

This model proposes that knowledge moves from one knowledge state to another.

Scardamalia and Bereiter propose that when engaged in the knowledge transforming a writer has moved from mere telling into problem solving. This requires presenting logical arguments that can be justified and reasoned out. In a classroom situation, this level of knowledge represents the ultimate goal in the teaching of writing. This model places upon the writer the requirement that in producing a coherent and accurate text, it is necessary to make notes, plan, and revise content. The model emphasizes the practical nature of writing indicating that immature writing is caused by lack of skills necessary for the production of a well ordered and coherent text. The concepts of cohesion and coherence have preoccupied many researchers especially with regard to whether measures of cohesion and coherence would be used to judge writing quality.

3.0 Cohesion, coherence and writing quality

3.1 Cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) "the concept of cohesion is a semantic one: it refers to relations in meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text" (p.4). The two authors have asserted that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into text (p4). This definition suggests that cohesion is a semantic concept attained when one makes reference to the meaning of words and concepts in a text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) further argue that cohesion is further seen to be part of the system of a language. The potential for cohesion lies within categories of such linguistic features responsible for bringing about cohesion. These are given as the systematic resources of substitution, ellipses, reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion. These linguistic features 'tie' sentences together in a cohesive tie to create a meaningful semantic unit or text. A cohesive tie is a semantic relation between an element in a text and some other element that is crucial to its interpretation (p 8).

The concept of cohesion as explained by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is similar to the concept of coherence since it emphasizes the semantic element of language.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) seem to suggest that there is a strong relationship between cohesion and coherence such that the attainment of cohesion is a guarantee of writing quality. Their research does not seem to clearly distinguish between cohesion and coherence. Since Halliday and Hasan (1976), there has been considerable research showing that it is possible to produce texts that are cohesive, although such texts would be found to be incoherent. An illustration is found in the pathological texts suggested by Brostoff, (1981) as well as in Enkvist (1990) and discussed later on in this paper when coherence is presented.

Issues have been raised with regard to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) interpretation of cohesion and coherence. Doyle (1982 p.390-393) has for instance identified a shortcoming of this research related to the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) discuss the text after it has been composed –the finished product, but fail to address the process of text creation.

In spite of the limitations identified in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work on cohesion in English, a significant number of researchers have found the work valuable in advancing further research related to cohesion. What follows below is a review of research that has been based on a study of cohesive ties in written compositions.

Crowhurst (1987) has used Halliday and Hasan (1976) five categories of cohesion to investigate cohesion in argument and narration at three grade levels. The five categories are given as the ties of substitution, ellipses, reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. The seminal work on cohesion done by Halliday and Hasan (1976) has been found to be a starting point for any research dealing with cohesion. To mention just one illustration of cohesive tie, we pick lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion involves either the reiteration of an item –repetition of an item, or the use of a synonym, near synonym, or superordinate term. Lexical cohesion could also be used in reference to lexical collocation. Collocation involves the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur for instance climb/ascend, order/obey, laugh/joke, garden/dig, and beach/waves/sand/swim/lifeguard.

Crowhurst (1987) carried out a study designed to examine the kinds of cohesive devices used by students at various developmental levels. Specifically, it examined argumentative and narrative prose written by students at grades 6,10 and 12 in order to determine the types of cohesive ties used at each grade level in each of the two modes of writing. Participants were from two high schools four elementary schools from a middle class area of a small Canadian city. The students wrote in response to a colour slide showing a performing whale in mid-air. Students were required to write two texts, a narrative and an argument. Students were allowed forty minutes to write.

Crowhurst (1987) found no overall tendency for the frequency of cohesive ties to increase with grade level. Some types of cohesion increased with grade level namely collocation and the use of synonyms. Other types of cohesion decreased with grade level, namely exophora, eausal conjunctives and temporal conjunctives. Greater use of synonyms and collocation by higher grades seems to reflect vocabulary development and greater tendency to elaborate.

Witte and Faigley (1981) studied a group of ten out of ninety freshman essays that had previously been rated holistically by two readers on a four-point scale. Five of the essays were selected from those given the lowest scores by both readers while five were selected from those with the highest scores. These ten essays were analyzed according to categories of error and according to syntactic features, as well as according to the number of types of cohesive ties. The researchers found that at the most general level of analysis, the high rated essays had more cohesive ties than the low –rated essays. In the low rated essays a cohesive tie of some type occurs once every 3.2 words, a difference in mean frequency of 1.7 words. Witte and Faigley concluded that "cohesion and coherence interact to a great degree but a cohesive text may only minimally be coherent... Besides explicit links within a text, a text must conform to a reader's expectations for particular types of texts and the reader's knowledge of the world" (p 200). Witte & Faigley further state that "lexical collocation is in all likelihood the subcategory of cohesion that best indicates overall writing ability" (p 200). Witte & Faigley (1981) conclude that cohesion brought by lexical collocation ensures quality writing.

The study by Witte and Faigley is instructive in two counts. Firstly, it highlights the cohesive devices that might be considered instrumental in determining writing quality, namely lexical collocation. 'The fundamental problem lies in the analysis of a writer's text. Whose collocation do we analyze – the reader's of the writer's ?' (p.199).

Witte and Faigley (1991) are aware of the severe limitations of their research findings and state-

> However promising cohesion analysis appears as a research tool and however encouraging the results of the present study seem, we feel that a number of important questions cannot be answered by analyzing cohesion. The first of these concerns writing quality. The quality or "success" of a text depends a great deal on factors outside the text itself, factors which lie beyond the scope of cohesion analysis' p. 199.

The study by Witte and Faigley (1981) is illuminating in that it points out the difficulties involved in applies the

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concept of cohesion as explained by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Critics of Witte and Faigley (1981) have argued that the research only used ten essays. Critics have indicated that the use of such a limited sample might bring to question credibility of the findings (O'Brien, 1992; Bamberg, 1984).

Tierney and Mosenthal (1983) asked two classes of 12th grade students to write essays based on two topics. The students viewed filmstrips that had topic and structure held relatively constant for each topic. The students wrote two essays each adding up to a total of 24 essays. The researchers found no correlation between the number of cohesive ties and coherence rankings for essays written. Tierney & Mosenthal (1983) conclude that although a count of cohesive ties helps identify cohesion in a text, a count of cohesive ties alone does not necessarily explain what makes a text coherent.

According to Bamberg (1984), there is merit in carrying out a detailed analyses of a small number of essays like the ones covered by Witte & Faigley (1981) and that of Tierney & Mosenthal (1983) as a way of acquiring valuable information about the interrelationships among textual features that constitute coherence. However it is not possible to use these methods to assess coherence of a large group of essays such as those written for the National Assessments of Educational Progress- (NAEP) because the exercise would take a very long time to complete. To re-examine coherence in such essays, Bamberg developed a faster holistic coherence scale based on studies carried out earlier by van Dijk (1978, 1980), and the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976).

A subset of essays was read and divided into four groups, with each group representing a different level of coherence achieved by writers. The most successful essays were found to be fully coherent, and the least being virtually incomprehensible. A four-point rubric was constructed by comparing features previously identified. To determine the relationship between essay quality and coherence further, a contingency table was constructed for each age group. A majority of good essays received high coherence scores. Bamberg found that both good and poor 17-year-old writers demonstrate greater control over textual features that create coherence that do 13-year-old writers. This demonstrates that there is value in identifying the textual features that enhance coherence since according to Bamberg (1984), the production of a coherent text is an indicator of good writing.

McCulley (1985) investigated the relationships among features of textual cohesion, as identified by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and primary trait assessments of writing quality and coherence with manuscript length being held constant. A random sample of 493 persuasive papers written by 17-year-olds during the 1978 –79 NAEP writing evaluation were analyzed. This study provides evidence strongly suggesting that textual cohesion is a sub-element of coherence in manuscripts of the same length. The cohesion indices of synonyms, hyponyms and collocations ties may be far more important attributes of coherence than some researchers have recognized (for instance Tierney & Mosenthal, 1983). What may be just as important however is the "lack of significant relationships between several other cohesive subcategories (such as conjunction and substitution)" (p278). McCulley's (1985) study suggests that coherence is a valid construct to judge writing quality.

Another valid construct in judging coherence in a text is the structure of a narrative. Structure has three considerations that enhance coherence: the first one requires that a narrative attain a logical flow of events. The second consideration refers to the ability of the writer to indicate causality (Trabasso, Secco & Broek, 1984; Schunk, 1975). Finally the writer needs to show a causal temporal nature of events. Such a structure will most likely produce a coherent narrative.

Shapiro & Hudson (1997 p 23) share a similar view when they assert that 'to make a story coherent, the child uses the story schema to structure the content into a defined sequence that includes a formal beginning, setting and background orientation to introduce characters, internal responses (e.g. thoughts and feelings) a problem and resolution (ie the plot) and an ending'.

The research on cohesion described above suggests that an analysis of cohesion alone is not sufficient in

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determining writing quality. The two other considerations are structure and coherence. Coherence backed by cohesion is an important factor in determining essay writing quality. This consideration further suggests that there might be value in examining the concept of coherence further if we intend to determine the quality of written narratives.

4. Coherence

In this section, coherence as a concept in writing is examined since it has traditionally been accepted as a component of writing research and writing instruction (e.g. Bamberg, 1983, 1984; Witte and Faigley, 1981; McCulley, 1985; Neuner, 1987; O'Brien, 1992; Fleckenstein, 1992). Regarded by linguists and other researchers as a vital part of writing quality, coherence is a virtual guarantee of writing quality (Stein and Albro, 1997; Shapiro and Hudson, 1997; Hoover, 1997; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). The concept of coherence is examined and how coherence is related to narrative writing is discussed.

4.1 The concept of coherence

Alexander Bain (1867) first examined the concept of coherence. When treating the paragraph, he defined the paragraph as 'a collection, or series of sentences with unity of purpose' (Bain, 1867 p91). The term unity has been used to mean 'comparative closeness of relationship' (Bain, 1867 p87). A paragraph is recognised when related ideas share a common ground. Bain further asserts that 'the bearing of each sentence of a paragraph on the sentences preceding needs to be explicit' (Bain, 1867 p94). He then sums up the idea of the paragraph by indicating that 'a paragraph is not a string of random or detached utterances, but a connected whole, the nature of the connections must be made apparent' (Bain, 1867 95).

When creating narratives, Bain (1867) states that 'in narrative, the opening sentence of a paragraph may have no further peculiarity than to indicate a new departure or a broad transition from what went before (p108).

McCrimmon (1963) extends Bain's idea about coherence and states-

> 'A paragraph is said to have coherence when its sentences are woven together or flow into each other. If a paragraph is coherent, the reader moves easily from one sentence to the next without feeling that there are gaps in the thought, puzzling gaps, or points not made' (McCrimmon, 1963 p82).

In the statement above, McCrimmon suggests that what gives a paragraph coherence is the knitting together of the idea or ideas rather than the individual sentences. In the production of a coherent text, the writer needs to provide transitions –bridges- between the thoughts expressed in sentences.

Coherence then is the quality that enables a writer and the reader to move easily from one sentence to the next and read the text as an integrated whole, rather than a series of separate sentences. This will be used as the first step towards a model of coherence.

Van Dijk (1977), a text linguist, prefers to discuss coherence from the point of view of discourse. He examines the semantic relationship between sentences and defines coherence as 'a semantic property of discourses, based

on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences' (1977 p 93). Van Dijk provides the following example to explain connectedness- "They went to the zoo". "Never had they been in a zoo before" (p126). Van Dijk's discussion of coherence refers to the reader's ability to make relationships between sentences in a text.

Van Dijk's assertion leads to a definition of coherence where coherence refers to the semantic property of discourses, based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences. This will be used as the second step towards a model of coherence.

A third step that will be used towards a model of coherence is one associated with Brostoff (1981) who makes two assertions -

'Coherence exists in a sequence of words, sentences and paragraphs in which the reader can perceive connections and understand the structure and therefore the meaning as he reads' (Brostoff, 1981 p279).

Defined positively, 'coherence' is 'the internal set of consistent relationships perceived in any stretch of discourse' (Brostoff quoting Bain).

To explain this model of coherence, Brostoff places coherence against incoherence stating that incoherence is 'writing in which separate, unrelated ideas appear to be juxtaposed: 'they are next to but not connected to, each other' (p278-9).

Coherence is made possible by the writer's provision of cues that guide the reader as he or she reads through a paragraph or text (Brostoff, 1981; Flackenstein, 1992). The term 'cues' is referred to by other writers. Bamberg (1983) for instance states-

> "Clearly stated topic sentences, an obvious organizational pattern, statements of topic and purpose and headings which indicate divisions of the text- these are all cues that facilitate a reader's integration of details in a text into a coherent whole. When such cues are missing, readers may be unable to make this integration (p 420).

Enkvist (1990, p.13) extends Brostoff's (1981) concept of coherence when he states that 'Coherence in text is attained only when we build up a world-picture around it'. Enkvist further states 'Conversely, a text strikes us as incoherent if we cannot build a plausible scenario around it'. The term 'plausible' has been explained to have two implications. The first one refers to a state of affairs in which a text might be true. This allows for a text based on fantasy. The second one means that a text is plausible if we can assign it to a system of human interaction conforming to maxims such as those explained by Grice (1975), or Leech (1983). Enkvist (1990) gives three groups of sentences to illustrate the presence or lack of coherence in text-

1. My car is black. Black English was a controversial subject in the seventies. At seventy most people have retired. To re-tire means 'to put new tires on a vehicle.' Some vehicles such as hovercraft have no wheels. Wheels go round (p12).

2. Susie left the howling ice cube in a bitter bicycle and it melted. It soon tinkled merrily in her martini. Into her drink she then also poured the grand piano she had boiled in a textbook of mathematics the night before. She chewed the martini, read the olive and went to bed. But she took her clothes off. She then took her clothes off.

3. The net bulged with the lightning shot. The referee blew his whistle and signaled. Smith had been offside. The two captains both muttered something. The goalkeeper sighed for relief (p12).

The sentences in (1) make sense only when seen in isolation. Considered as a group, the apparent links in the sentences fail to make a logical connection. We cannot produce a summary of (1) because the sentences do not add up to a consistent world picture. The sentences are incoherent. To use Brostoff's (1981) expression, the sentences are 'next to' but not 'connected to' each other.

The second group of sentences - (2)- is far removed from the world as we know it The writer uses strange expressions such as 'howling ice cube', and 'bitter bicycle'. The resulting group of sentences is nonsensical at various levels. The writer produces contradictions or images of an impossible world.

The third group of sentences - (3)- is different from (1) and (2) both in meaning and in relation to the world, as we know it. Enkvist argues that a soccer-wise reader can relate text (3) with a familiar world-picture – a scenario or text world in which the text makes sense. The group of sentences makes logical connections. The sentences are coherent. A summary of the three paragraphs is suggested by Enkvist-

> "Thus (1) and (2) have cohesion but not coherence, and (3) has coherence although it lacks overt, grammatically describable cohesion markers such as repetition or anaphora. The coherence in (3) follows from being able to surround it with a plausible text world" p 14.

Enkvist (1990) explains the term 'grammatically describable' as follows. Terms such as *net, referee, blew his whistle, offside, captain, goalkeeper* all belong to one semantic field. We must also know that the events described could plausibly co-occur in an actual soccer game as they co-occur in the text.

This model of coherence implies that coherence can be attained when one makes sense and logic in a text. We will consider this as the third model of coherence that will be used and state that coherence exists in a sequence of words, sentences and paragraphs in which the reader can perceive connections and understand the structure and therefore the meaning as she or he reads a text.

Writers may provide linguistic cues, but it is the readers who fill the gaps between ideas by building relationships that bridge ideas and who thereby create their sense of order (Beaugrande and Dressler 1981). It is with this in mind that Fleckenstein (1992) asserts that 'coherence is as much a reader-based phenomenon as it is a writer-based creation' (p81). O'Brien (1992) expresses a similar view when he states that 'there is an implicit agreement between the writer and the reader. The writer will work to some plan which is, or will become, clear to the reader. In turn the reader interprets what is written according to a plan or schema which makes the intention of the writer evident' (p107).

Van Dijk (1977) makes a further contribution to coherence as part of writing quality by introducing the concept of structure. This model of coherence entails 'the ordering of sentences' and 'the ordering of facts'. For actions and events the discourse ordering will be called normal if their temporal and causal ordering corresponds to the linear order of the discourse (p.97). Such an assertion is relevant to narrative study as it implies that narrative coherence can be enhanced when events and episodes in a narrative are presented following an order. Van Dijk (1977) further asserts that 'essays, in addition to being unified around a theme or topic must have an overall form or structure if readers are to find them coherent over the whole discourse (p 149). Any model relating coherence with structure is relevant to the current study and requires consideration.

Structure is one of the elements guaranteeing coherence in text. O'Brien (1992) posits that 'the structure, plan or schema is the procedure that guarantees coherence and therefore communication' (p107). Structure is a necessary attribute of coherence.

Writers may provide linguistic cues, but it is the readers who fill the gaps between ideas by building relationships that bridge ideas and who thereby create their sense of order (Beaugrande and Dressler 1981). It is with this in mind that Flackenstein (1992) asserts that 'coherence is as much a reader-based phenomenon as it is a writer-based creation' (p81). A similar view is expressed by O'Brien (1992), when he states that 'there is an implicit agreement between the writer and the reader. The writer will work to some plan which is, or will become, clear to the reader. In turn the reader interprets what is written according to a plan or schema which makes the intention of the writer evident' (p107).

A further extension of the concept of coherence is found in Grabe and Kaplan (1996 p71). Their discussion summarizes what stands out in the majority of models proposed by current research on coherence (e.g. Bain, 1867; Bamberg, 1983, 1984; Brostoff, 1981; Enkvist, 1990; Mann and Thompson 1988, 1992; Martin 1992; McCrimmon, 1963; Meyer, 1975; O'Brien, 1992; Sperber and Wilson, 1986; van Dijk and Kintch, 1983). They posit that coherence is defined (implicitly or explicitly) as:

- having a discourse theme (overall topic or discourse)
- comprising a set of relevant assertions relating logically among themselves by means of subordination, coordination, and or superordination from the level of the sentence to the top level of structuring of a text, and
- being organized by information structure imposed on assertions most effectively to guide the reader in understanding the theme or the intent of the author.

The summary offered by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) offers some useful insights into the concept of coherence. This summary suggests that coherence encapsulates the concepts of topic (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Halliday and Hasan, 1989; Martin, 1992), theme (Britton and Gulgoz, 1991; Kaplan et al. 1983; Singer, 1990), logic (Hoey, 1991; Kaplan, 1972; Mann and Thompson, 1988; Meyer, 1987; Singer, 1990; van Dijk, and Kintch, 1983), and structure (Beck et al.1991; Britton and Gulgoz 1991; Martin, 1992; Singer, 1990; OBrien, 1992, 1996). Structure refers to the organization of content or information in a text. Such considerations tie up with the main patterns in the current investigation of narrative structure. The concepts of orientation, the main event, the conflict, and conflict resolution all lead to the production of coherent narratives. Coherence encapsulates the concepts of discourse theme or overall topic, logic, structure and/or the organisation of content or information in a text.

The model proposed by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) will be used for this study in that it encapsulates the insights of the previous models and extends them.

In this study coherence will be equated with the quality in writing that assists attain a logical narrative. Narrative coherence depends directly upon how potentially cohesive, logically and causally the individual story events are to one another (Trabasso et. al., 1984; Enkvist, 1990). The research by Trabasso et. al. (1984) has further stated that 'the more cohesive the elements, the more easily the child will find relationships between the events and construct a coherent representation' (p 83). The term cohesive will be addressed in the section that will deal with cohesion at a later section of this discussion.

A narrative establishes logically connected events that are causal and temporal. For an event to be said to be causal, it means that 'B only happened because of A'. In the words of Trabasso et al. (1984).

'to say that A causes B means that A and B are changes that occurred such that A was necessary in the circumstances for B. When B occurs, A is necessary in the circumstances for B because if A did not occur, then B would not have occurred' (p85).

Events in a narrative are said to be temporal when they happen in a sequence, one after the other. An example is 'John arrived home, then took off his shoes and slumped on the couch'. The actions performed by John are connected by *and, then,* and *commas.* The causal and temporal arrangement of events in narrative is considered necessary in understanding the logic of narratives (Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Gordon and Braun 1983; Mackie, 1980).

The events are constructed in a manner that is consistent with our world-picture (Stein and Albro, 1997; Trabasso et al. 1984). The current study concerns itself with narrative structure. Structure has features of order and connectedness, both of which should reflect and contribute to coherence in narrative (Labov, 1972; Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1979; Gordon and Braun, 1982, 1983; Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1986). If organization and coherence are related, improving children's knowledge of structure or organisation in text might also improve overall story coherence in children's written narratives. In the words of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), children that write coherently exercise executive control over their work.

5.0 'Narrative', 'Story', and Narrative Structure

Narratives can be either in oral or written form. Either way they possess a structure that holds them together. This study explores how the narrative structure may assist the teaching of narrative composition writing in secondary schools. Below is a brief investigation of the two terms 'narrative' and 'story'. This is followed by an examination of what is meant by 'narrative structure'. The section is concluded by a discussion of what a narrative is from the point of view of structure. This section is followed by a review of the literature related to the teaching of composition. The final section examines the existing literature on the teaching of the narrative.

5:1 Narrative and Story

The two terms 'narrative' and 'story' have generated debate on whether or not they are interchangeable. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) suggests a three-way distinction between 'story', 'text' and 'narration'. She suggests that 'story' is a series of logically and chronologically related events while 'narration' is the manner of talking about these event sequences. The 'text' is what we read. She further suggests 'Whereas story is a succession of events 'text' is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes the telling' (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: p3). The text provides an interpretation of events that constitute the discourse. Ervin-Tripp and Kuntay (In Givon, 1997) have acknowledged that the two terms 'narrative' and 'story' could be used distinctly but they have chosen to overlook such differences arguing that for the purposes of their paper, the two terms are used as if they were interchangeable. Ervin-Tripp and Kuntay have concerned themselves with the actual use of language in extended discourse.

Labov and Waletzky (1967) define narrative as 'consisting of a sequence of two or more narrative clauses that report events that actually happened, or as if they actually happened'. These temporal events must advance the story line. Essentially a narrative consists of at least two restricted narrative clauses whose sequence cannot be reversed without changing the semantic interpretation of the story (Labov and Waletzky 1967: p.28). An alternative definition of narrative is offered by Labov (1972) who posits that narrative is 'one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred' (Labov 1972 p.359-360).

In most of the literature reviewed for this study, little distinction is made between the various interpretations of story-narrative, storyteller-narrator, storytelling-narrating. This notwithstanding the term 'story' will be used in reference to work that may be fantasy. This is also called creative fiction. 'Narrative' will, on the other hand, refer to events that are being recounted. A narrator can use imagination to create events that unfold in a particular desired manner. This will be referred to as 'story'. Story and narrative are however similar in structure and hence in the proposed study, a rigid distinction between the two terms will not be imposed.

Related to this view is a definition of narratives offered by Trabasso and Ozyurek where they state that -

'Narratives, be they personal, third person or fictional are the main means by which we interpret, represent and communicate life experience and its personal significance.'

(Trabasso and Ozyurek. In Givon 1997: p.269)

The point made here about life experience is significant. People use narratives, whether written or oral to reflect both on their past and their present. Experiences of the past are meant to assist explain the present. It is expected that mistakes made in the past will be corrected and lessons learned will help shape the future.

The communicative aspect of the definition is equally crucial. A narrative involves a teller, a tale, or a message (or moral) and a listener. Language provides the channel through which the narrative is passed on to the listener or addressee. The language of a narrative is structured in a manner that assists the human mind to commit the narrative to memory and recall the events at a later point in time (Toolan 1988).

In a discussion of the 'story', Shuman (1986) asserts that, 'stories categorize experience' (Shuman 1986: p.20). The operational term here is 'categorization of experience'. A story or a narrative can generate, in the listener or reader, an experience that is good or bad, harsh or appealing. A story or a narrative can create highly charged emotions that lead to anger and disenchantment or it can lead to the creation of envy and admiration of characters. Shuman further states that -

'Stories that purport to report actual experiences represent a negotiable reality. Reports of past events may appear to convey information, but at the same time, they also demonstrate relationships between tellers, hearers, characters and others.' (Shuman 1986: p.20-21)

The experience categorized can either be that of the teller and listener or the experiences of characters in a narrative. This experience contributes to the content narratives are made of. In a trickster narrative, there is the experience of the character that performs the trick, and then there is that of the character who gets tricked. The listener or reader of such a narrative views the two parties as distinct from one another.

The storyteller takes what he tells from experience -his own or from that reported by others. And he in turn makes the experience of those who are listening to his tale.

(Benjamin W. 1969. In Bauman 1986: p2)

Experiences are shared. The narrator and the listener all share the experiences of the characters in a tale. Shuman further refers to experiences as 'the stream of overlapping activities that make up everyday life' (Shuman 1986: p.20). The suggestion made here is that life is not fully sequential. Some activities overlap one another and life becomes one big puzzle full of contradictions and conflicts. One function of the narratives is to inform on the culture from which the narrative is derived. Stein and Albro state-

By nature and definition, stories reflect the social values, beliefs, dilemmas and goals that underlie and motivate human interaction. Even when cultural variations in knowledge and storytelling are considered, stories almost always chronicle some aspects of a dilemma and the solutions that are used to resolve the conflict

(Stein N. and Albro E. in Bamberg M 1997: p.6)

The statement above is suggests that the content of a narrative is usually culturally determined. The oral narratives used in the current study are derived from the culture of the Kikuyu of Kenya.

Mandler and Johnson (1977) posit that a story is made up of propositions. The two researchers claim that 'the simplest story must have at least four propositions representing a setting, a beginning, a development and an ending if it is to be considered a story' (Mandler and Johnson, 1977). Using Mandler and Johnson's model of story analysis, Anson and Kroll (1984) carried out an analysis of stories told by 54 nine-year-olds from Bristol England. From their study, they found that an understanding of story structure assisted pupils in their narrative composition writing. This underpins the importance of students' understanding of narrative structure.

5.2 The Narrative Structure

Three studies will be considered in the discussion of the technical term 'narrative structure'. These studies will include the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967), Labov (1972) and Mandler and Johnson, (1977). The study by Mandler & Johnson (1977) is discussed in more detail since their model influenced this study.

Shown below is diagrammatic representation of the internal structure of a narrative as presented by Labov and Waletzky (1967 p. 41)

Figure I

O= orientation

C= complication

E= evaluation

R= resolution

According to Labov and Waletzky (1967) the orientation, -O- introduces the reader to significant background details in a story such as characters, time, or setting. The story escalates as the complicating action –C- develops and reaches a high point in the evaluation –E- where the significance of the story is clear. The term 'high point' is used to refer to the point at which a story builds through the recapitulation of events and then often suspends the action at this crisis point while the importance of the story is highlighted. Subsequently, the resolution –R- of this crisis is provided through more recapitulation of events. This means that narratives are organized around one or more key points that are stressed by the narrator. Coda refers to the way a narrative is concluded. An example of coda is given as, "And that was that" or "And that- that was it, you know."(Labov 1972 p. 365) The coda is the item or clause that signals the end of a narrative.

Labov (1972) introduces 'abstract' before orientation arguing that the addition was necessary since 'it is not uncommon for narrators to begin with one or two clauses summarizing the whole story'. Labov (1972) hence presented the basic structure of a narrative in a model composed of six ordered units, namely abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution and (optional) coda (Labov 1972: p.363). Labov argues that abstract is significant as it 'encapsulates the point of the story' by allowing the narrator to 'summarize the whole story' (p.363). This summary can come as a question asked by the narrator at the beginning of a narrative.

In 'orientation', reference is made to the identification in some way of the time, place, persons and their activity or the situation in which they find themselves all within the first several narrative clauses. In addition, orientation clauses may provide background information such as knowledge that characters in the story may or may not have, mood of characters or other information that is necessary to understanding the narrative. Viewed in this way, orientation clauses have a semantic function (Tripp and Kernan 1977 p.94).

Labov (1972) argues that 'evaluation' is possibly the most important part of a narrative that has unfortunately been ignored by many in the analysis of the narrative. Evaluation is the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its raison d'être: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at (Labov 1972 p.366).

At the point of completing the telling of a narrative, one must always tell the narrative in a way that avoids the most disturbing question- 'so what?' Labov suggests that every good narrator is continually warding off this question; when his narrative is over, it should be unthinkable for a bystander to say 'so what?' Instead, the appropriate remark would be 'He did?' or similar means of registering the reportable character of the events of a narrative. Evaluation clauses may occur at any point in the narrative and they are not clustered at any particular point (Ervin-Tripp and Kernan, 1977 p.95).

Codas have the property of bridging the gap between the moment of time at the end of the narrative proper and the present. They bring the narrator and the listener back to the point at which they entered the narrative. The coda can thus be seen as a means of solving the problem of indicating the end of a 'turn' at speaking (Labov, 1972: p.366). Codas are structural in function and serve to signal the end of a narrative.

In summary Labov suggests that a complete narrative begin with an abstract, followed by an orientation, It then proceeds to the complicating action, evaluation and resolution. It then returns the listener to the present time with the coda.

Mandler and Johnson (1977) analyze narrative structure by introducing a set of rules that govern the structure of a narrative in what they refer to as a story grammar. Mandler & Johnson also use the term 'story schema' to refer to a set of expectations about the internal structure of stories. This internal structure serves to facilitate both encoding and retrieval of story content. Mandler & Johnson view a simple story as one that has a single protagonist in each episode. The events in each episode may lead to another episode in which a different character becomes the protagonist, but within a given episode, only one protagonist is allowed.

The underlying structure of a story can be represented as a tree structure, which makes explicit the constituent structure and the relations between constituents. Events in the story are related both by the place in the tree structure, i.e., the type of node which they represent, and by between-node connections which may be either causal or temporal.

STORY

Setting event structure

episode

beginning development ending

The schema shows how the story is set, the event structure, the crisis, the resolution and the coda.

Mandler and Johnson's model is based on a set of re-write rules that summarize a story as comprising of a setting and event structure. This compares with what Labov in his model refers to as 'abstract' and 'orientation'.

STORY == SETTING AND EVENT STRUCTURE

Settings prepare the stage to the listener and the reader by introducing the protagonist and other characters in the story. Settings also inform on the time and locale of the story (Mandler and Johnson 1977; Givon, 1997; Freedle 1979)

After the setting, what follows in a story is an event structure. This has a beginning usually introduced by the first action verb in the narrative. This is also called the 'initiating event'. In some narratives, the initiating event happens in the mind. This is also called a psychological action. At times what a character is thinking about constitutes a significant event that might have a lot of bearing on what happens later in a narrative.

The second function of the initiating event is to introduce the first episode of the narrative. An episode, according to Mandler and Johnson consists of three causally connected nodes, all of which appear at the same level of the tree. As a re-write rule it is given as -

EPISODE== BEGINNING CAUSE DEVELOPMENT

ENDING

The essential structure of a single episode story is that a protagonist is introduced in the setting. There follows an episode, in which something happens, causing the protagonist to respond to it. This in turn brings about an event or state of affairs that ends the episode.

A beginning may consist of one or more events. A beginning causes the protagonist to respond in some way forming the development. A protagonist tries to find some way to realize the goal. If the outcome is not successful, the episode may cause a close, but frequently, the protagonist tries again. Goal paths are recursive. Any number of attempts to achieve the same goal may occur. If the protagonist changes the goal, a new episode begins..

In a simple story in which there is a single goal path, there may be considerable redundancy between an outcome and an ending.

When an ending to a story is not well -formed and the story ends abruptly, it might prompt someone recalling it to state 'And I don't remember if they lived happily ever after or not'. The study done by Mandler and Johnson (1977) can be summed up in one paragraph given below-

A major thesis of the current study is that correct temporal ordering is dependent on the degree of structure

present in prose and that stories have a higher degree of structure than any other types of prose passages (c/f Thorndyke, 1975). In assessing children's ability to recall a story in correct temporal order, therefore, it becomes important to examine the structure of stories being used (p141).

5:3 Narrative and Language Development

Narratives assist language development and are therefore tools of language learning. Children learn language through hearing narratives. Dell Hymes states that 'narratives are undoubtedly part of a child's experience of language' (Hymes, 1996: p.121)

In the teaching of language, the instructor not only teaches narratives and also teaches narrative structure. Studies on discourse have indicated that children learn structures

Pupils may know that a 'good' paragraph should have a topic sentence and supporting details, but those same pupils may not ably generate a 'good' paragraph or a developed argument. Similarly, students may be aware of narrative structure up to a point where they ably identify incorrect structures; but have difficulties creating narratives using correct structures. Their problem will be investigated in depth in the current study.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) have indicated that 'most research on discourse schema knowledge in children has dealt with narrative' (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1986: p.784). After reviewing a number of related studies Stein and Trabasso (1982) state-

The use of schematic knowledge is so powerful that listeners have little control over the types of retrieval strategies used during recall of narrative information. Even when listeners are instructed to reproduce texts in a verbatim form they cannot do so when the text contains certain types of omissions or certain types of events (217)

(In Scardamalia and Bereiter 1986: p.784)

What has been discussed above suggests that from a very early age, children develop a passive knowledge of narrative structure. This ability represents the passive aspect of learning. The active part of this is represented in the ability of the pupil to use this passive knowledge to correct a badly told narrative and then compose a well-formed narrative on a variety of topics. Data generated from the current study will demonstrate that pupils who have received instruction on how narratives are structured will not only create well-formed narratives but that they will also use such skills as a vehicle with which to improve their narrative compositions. Students' implicit knowledge of narrative structure will be made active and the data presented demonstrates how such implicit knowledge is made explicit or active.

Method

Subjects

Data for this paper is part of a larger study of the relationship between narrative structure and the teaching of writing. 177 students from two secondary schools in Kenya aged between 15 and 18 participated in the study. All the students were in their first year of secondary school. School A had 92 students while school B had 85. In school A one student did not participate in all the writing tasks and was eliminated from the data. In school B, two students could not take part in the study as consent to take part was denied by parents. Data from the two students was excluded in the analysis. School A was visited in the second half of term two while school B was

visited in the first half of term three. In each school two groups took part, one making up the experimental group while the second one constituted the control group. The researcher taught the experimental groups in each school.

Procedure

The study took six weeks in each school. School A was visited in the second half of term two while school B was visited in the first half of term three. In each school two groups took part, one making up the experimental group while the second one constituted the control group. The researcher taught the experimental groups in each school. In both schools, the control groups were taught by their regular teachers and their learning programs went on uninterrupted.

6.0 Results

6.1 Tentative observations

Introduction

After receiving instruction on narrative structure, fourteen to eighteen year-old high school students in the experimental group wrote narratives whose structure and language was different from narratives written by their counterparts in the control group. Given below is a summary of patterns emerging from an intensive investigation of results from both groups.

6.2 Structure

Narratives written by students both in the control and experimental groups indicate an awareness of narrative structure. Prior to the intervention, most students seemed to be aware that a narrative should have an orientation, a conflict and a closure. However, most writers are unaware that narratives that provide elaborate orienting information before embarking on the details of the narrative are considered better than those that fail to do this (Cortazzi and Jin, 2000; Kernan, 1977; Bacia, 1984: Labov, 1982: Labov and Walezky, 1967: Brewer and Lichtenstein, 1981). An elaborate orientation assists the writer in providing elements of the narrative that serve to make narratives interesting to, and appreciated by, the reader.

According to Labov (1982 p.226) good narratives give orienting information on four types of data: -time and place, the characters (participants) in the action and the general behaviour before or at the time of the first action (initiating event). This information is usually concentrated at the beginning in an orientation section. However, some orienting information can be placed later in the narrative (Labov, 1982).

After providing time and place (setting), the reader needs to know whose story is being told. Therefore it is necessary that the writer introduce the main character as soon as possible. Characters need to be part of the orientation. In the presentation of characters, Bacia (1994 p 43) posits that "what matters most are those aspects of the profiles which are going to make my story happen". Bacia further argues that it is of no use wasting time developing interesting personality traits for a character if those traits are of no pertinence to the story. A writer uses elaborate character traits to indicate character change or permanence. A reader appreciates a character by what the author says about them, what the other characters say about them or by what they do in a narrative. Elaborate character traits therefore enhance coherence in a narrative (Bacia, 1994; McGann and Schwartz, 1988).

Direct speech can be used to provide details about a character's background, age and education (Bacia, 1994 p 52-3). Direct speech further provides leads that 'prick the nearly universal human desire to eavesdrop on juicy conversation' (Fletcher, 1994 p84).

Fletcher's comments relate to the experience of reading a book, but such experience is similar to the reading of a narrative. Fletcher further states that 'Having overheard a tantalizing glimpse into people's lives, it is difficult for most readers to put down a book' (p84). A writer offers the reader such a chance by including dialogue early in a narrative.

In an elaborate orientation, the writer foreshadows the main complication in the narrative by providing an abstract. Without giving away the story, the abstract summarizes the point in advance or states a general proposition that the entire narrative will exemplify. For example, "Something terrible happened to me...at the weekend. I locked my baby in the car" (Cortazzi and Jin, 2000 p.104). Abstract touches on the theme of the narrative.

The studies cited above seem to suggest that good orientations have a setting, an abstract, characters and character traits, and an initiating event.

Poor orientations present narratives with no abstracts, and even when given a prompt, they are unable to develop such prompts coherently. They have undeveloped characters whose traits are unrelated with the action in the rest of the narrative. By contrast, good orientations introduce characters by outlining their traits and provide hints that foreshadow the main conflict or complication of the narrative. Good orientations further present characters that contrast one another in an effort to pre-empt the main conflict or complication of the narrative. When prompts are provided, good writers develop them coherently.

Prior to the intervention, students wrote narratives that had orientations in which characters and their traits were not always associated to events and episodes in the narratives (for example story 525 below). Some noticeable changes in narratives written after the intervention included the creation of characters with clear character traits, the development of prompts provided and the inclusion of setting giving details of time and place of the narrative.

Following below is an examination of narratives written by the Kenyan students at pretest indicating how much of these qualities are visible in the narratives.

Comparison between pretest and posttest

Given below is a demonstration of differences between narratives written in the pretest and those written in the posttest. Orientations written by four students, one from the control group and three from the experimental group are selected for examination. There are eight orientations, four in the pretest and four in the posttest.

Pretest

Example 1.1 An orientation from the control group at pretest -Story no. 525 (ID 1W-47)

1. In a crowd, she was unnoticeable because she looked so ordinary,

   like so many others.

2. But in every other aspect Mwihaki was different in her *behaviour.*

3. She was almost the same *size* as her classmates.
4. She was fond of telling others that *she was created in her*
5. that meant that she was the *most beautiful* in the school.
6. She was *the last born* among eight in her family.
7. She was *proud of it* because anything she needed her parents struggled hard to get.
8. Sometimes *her behaviour were awkward* but *her parents could do nothing to stop her.*
9. By the time she was in standard seven, she was famous of her unnormal *habits.*
10. Mwihaki at her young age she was performing well well even *at times she could be awarded some prizes.*
11. As *she grew old* her *brain capacity also grew old* as her teachers said.

Positives Negatives

-It is set in a school (line 5) What school?- elaborate

-Inferred Mwihaki (Prot.) is a student "classmates" (line 3)

-Mwihaki Proud (char. Trait) and theme -Mwihaki unnormal behavior- vague

-Size- (line 3) Same size as her classmates -Size - the size of her classmates?

- She was created in her, (line 4) unclear
- Line 6- of what relevance?
- Line 10- relevance?
- Line 11 –unclear

An orientation from the experimental group at the **pretest**

Example 1.2 Story no. 414 (ID 1Y- 4) A KIDNAP ATTEMPT

1. I wished the ground would suddenly open up and swallow me.
2. Never before had I so yearned for and yet dreaded to face a man whose figure showed dimly against the grey mist of rain.
3. My head was hot and rumbling angrily like a closed kettle of boiling water, threatening to burst fourth because I did not know what to do at that moment

4. and I had a pot full of water which my mother had sent me to fetch in a nearby river.

5. "What are you doing here?" the man asked.

6. I was trembling like a chameleon in a feeble tree that I was unable to answer his question.

7. "What are you doing here?" this time he asked with great determination.

8. But I managed to answer him.

9. He took hold of my pot and everything I was holding and he told me that he is going to walk me home but little did I know what he was up to.

Positives Negatives

-Use of direct speech (lines 5,7) Antagonist- his figure- (line 2) is unclear

-Prot. gone to fetch water. Elaborate? – mean character (lines 5 and 7) elaborate

- foreshadowing (line 9)

Details to this narrative are thin and sketchy. All we know about the setting is that the protagonist had gone on an errand to fetch water 'from a nearby river'. In the development of the prompt, details regarding the antagonist are lacking (line 2). Such details would have assisted develop the abstract. One gets very little about the antagonist from the question he asks (lines 5 and 7). The character of the antagonist is flat and lifeless. While direct speech has been used to show the antagonist as a mean character, it falls short of the reader's expectation as it lacks elaborate details of the antagonist's background, age or education (Bacia, 1994).

One positive aspect about this orientation is that there is foreshadowing in line 9, "but little did I know what he was up to". This creates interest urging the reader to read the rest of the narrative.

We turn to Example 1.3 written by a student in the experimental group in the pretest.

Pretest

Example 1.3 Story no. 239 (ID 1Y 29) Orientation written in the pretest by someone in the experimental group.

1. I wished the ground would suddenly open up and swallow me.
2. Never before had I so yearned for and yet so dreaded to face a man.
3. He was right there standing infront of me the very President of America the most powerful state in the whole world
4. I had heard of his successful life and wanted to meet and know him but this was so soon.

5. This all came to be when I was in primary school in standard six
6. I had this inner ability in me to compose poems and recite them to the school at large.
7. However no one took notice of this not even the teachers.
8. My best friend is one of the few who admired this ability and she always gave me hope.
9. At the tender age of ten, I liked poems.
10. I read all the poetic books I could get hold of and thought that poetry was interesting.
11. I once tried to write a poem but it was terrible or at least I thought so.
12. My sister was also a poet.
13. She composed her own poems and recited them to congretions of people during certain functions like harambees.
14. I watched do all this and I admired her.
15. She is the one who lured me into reading poetry but she wasn't aware
16. Infact nobody was.
17. There were usually prize givig days at school and on this function, we were privileged to have the District Education Officer as the guest of honour.
18. My best friend always told me to recite one of my poems during the function but at the mention of the District Education Officer's presence all my courage desserted me.
19. This continued for some time and one day I decided to give it a shot.
20. I wanted to explore my talent.
21. I always imagined myself in newspapers and as a celebrity.
22. I not only imagined but I also wanted this.
23. So I had to recite and composed my poems whenever I had an opportunity.
24. It was only one week to the prize giving ceremony.
25. I had booked for a chance to recite a poem.
26. The master of ceremony was reluctant but he agreed after much pleading from my comrade and I.

Positives Negatives

-has a setting –place- primary school Too long, not focused

-time –one week to the prize giving ceremony

-character traits are developed (lines 4,6,9-11)

-the initiating event (line 25)

-the positive use of flashback foreshadows the main event

the writer has fulfilled all the criteria set.

This orientation is remarkable for its length (367 words). The narrative is set in a primary school (line 5). The time is "only one week to the prize giving ceremony" (line 24). Lines 1 and 2 provided to the student constitute the abstract. The writer has developed them as required.

Character traits are provided in lines 4, 6, 9-11. The initiating event is found in line 25: "I had booked for a chance to recite a poem". This orientation fulfills all the criteria set. The writer needs to get the attention of the readers early in the narrative. The positive use of flashback in this orientation (lines 5-18) foreshadows the main event.

An orientation from the experimental group at pretest

Example 1.4 Story no. 546 (ID 1Y 37)

1. I wished the ground would suddenly open up and swallow me.
2. Never before had I so yearned for and yet so dreaded to face a man standing infront of me with a long cane on his hand.
3. It all started on a chilly morning when I woke up late for school.
4. It was seven o'clock and we were expected to be in school immediately the bell rang which was at fifteen minutes past seven.

This orientation has a setting (line 3 -4). The reader is given an idea about the time and the place of the orientation. Lines 1-2 constitute the abstract but they required elaboration. It emphasizes the movement of time and the kind of actions the protagonist expects to do within the limited time available. Details related to the protagonist are missing out. This orientation does not meet the criteria set since it lacks elaboration and might therefore be regarded as insufficient.

From the sample orientations shown above, the students exhibited mixed ability in writing orientations. Before the intervention, the students were aware of some of the requirements of a good orientation and they were not aware of others. For instance, students were aware that a good orientation needed to have a setting providing a place and time of the narrative. But the students were unaware that such settings were expected to be elaborate and foreshadow the action in the narrative. Prior to the intervention, the students were aware that the narratives should introduce the protagonist, but they were not aware that the protagonist's traits assist in telling a large part of the narrative. Good orientations are expected to provide elaborate settings giving details of place and time of the narrative. Good orientations also provide an abstract indicating the general direction the narrative will take. Characters –at least the protagonist – are introduced so that the reader is made aware about whom the story will be. There were some students that had difficulties developing a coherent orientation from a given prompt while others showed few difficulties and wrote coherent orientations whose only limitation was elaboration.

This study had a sample size of 177 students. The narrative topics had three different writing styles that placed different demands on the students. After the intervention, it was expected that narratives written by students in the experimental group would show marked improvements in the way students wrote and elaborated the orientations.

1.3.2 Posttest

Posttest

An orientation from the control group (ID 1W 47)

Example 1.4 Story no. 421

AN UNEXPECTED HELP

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1. I wished the ground would suddenly open up and swallow me.
2. Never before had I so yearned for and yet dreaded to face a man with great kindness.
3. The man approached me in such a manner you can't imagine.
4. I was sitted in a lonely ground silent dead, my thoughts were quite far away.
5. They were remembering about my past events while still a young school girl.
6. The man's face was shone by a big smile which I ignored
7. I reacted as if nothing had happened.
8. I looked at that stranger and amazed with his great smile still on his face.
9. She looked at my face to see my reaction but he was not lucky.
10. He greated Hallo, girl.
11. I nodded my face it sensed nothing in my mind.

Positives

Setting –"a lonely ground dead" (unclear) Negatives

- -the reader is given very little about the antag.
- Vague- (line 2) Whose kindness?
- Line 3 what manner?
- Gender mix-up (line 9)
- No clear setting

Incoherence in this presentation could be attributed to a misunderstanding of the task ahead or a misinterpretation of the question. The subject is about a man she dreaded most not a man who appears anxious to assist her (she refers to him as a man with great kindness, -line 2 whose face was shown by a big smile line 6).

Line 7 would have been improved by simply stating "I ignored him"

Line 11 is simply incoherent.

There is no improvement between this narrative and the one written in the pretest (see example 1.1)

The orientation has not given an indication of a clear setting. Line 4 refers to 'a lonely ground'. In terms of providing 'time and place' as the reader does not know the location of the lonely ground. As for the abstract, line 2 shows a misinterpretation of the dreaded man. The man is dreaded and yet he is 'with great kindness'. The stranger is shown to be 'kind', and has 'a smile' indicating warmth of character. The protagonist is shown to be cold as she 'ignores' the stranger at every turn (line 6-7 and 9). There is little or no improvement between this orientation and example 1.1 given above.

A few issues are left unclear. Lines 3, 8 and 11 are incoherent and require to be developed. Lines 4 and 5 are also incoherent. The writer refers to her thoughts stating "my thoughts were quite far away. They were remembering about ..." The expression is difficult to follow. In line 9, the writer mixes up the male and female gender referring to the man as a "she". The prompt provided in the task has not been developed in any coherent way.

Example 1.6 below is another orientation from the experimental group written after the intervention.

Posttest

Example 1.3 Story no. 529 (ID 1Y4) 'Mwihaki and the old lady'

1. In a crowd, she was unnoticeable because she looked so ordinary like so many others.
2. But in every other aspect, Mwihaki was different
3. mainly because she wore tattered clothes her hair was shabby and she was just different
4. as others had wore very nice clothes their hairs were looking nice and everything about them was just perfect.
5. Mwihaki's family was very poor and they did not have enough riches to shelter, buy clothes, educate and also to buy food.
6. After the crowd dispersed, Mwihaki was alone left there looking up the sky and was cursing the day she was born.

Positives Negatives

Difference in Mwihaki- elaboration No indication of time (place – in a crowd)

-came from a poor family unlike the others -the writer does not improve setting

-(line 3)-wore tattered clothes, shabby hair,

-lacked food and shelter

-lacked money for the provision of education

-reaction from the prot. (line 6)

This writer demonstrates economy of language. She has employed contrast and adjectives to make her writing elaborate yet tighter.

This example spells out aspects that make Mwihaki different from the other characters in the orientation (lines 3-5). The difference was that unlike everyone else, she came from a poor family as shown by her clothes, hair and lack of food and shelter. Lines 1-4 help develop the abstract as well as the contrast that makes Mwihaki different at least in appearance. Although the writer does not give an indication of time, the reference to crowd indicates something about the setting. Compare this with example 1.2.

In terms of characterization, the writer uses the sense of contrast to highlight the difference in the character of Mwihaki. The abstract has been developed coherently. However, the writer does not show improvement in the setting of the narrative.

Posttest

Example 1.5 Story no.154 (ID 1Y29) orientation written by a student in the experimental group

http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/kig02111.htm

1. In a crowd, **she** was unnoticeable because **she** looked so ordinary, like *so* many others.
2. But in every other aspect, Mwihaki was different.
3. **She** was *tall, light in complexion and beautiful* but that was not what made **her** different,
4. **she** was *a bright girl* schooling at Hernia secondary school.
5. **She** was *well-behaved* and *very social*
6. but still that was not what made **her** different.
7. Mwihaki came from a *wealthy* family which was *very loving*.
8. **They** were a *popular* family which everyone loved.
9. Few were the enemies **they** had.
10. Mwihaki is the *only child* in their family.
11. The story of **her** life as a child is what makes **her** different.
12. **Her** real father was put to jail for alleged murder.
13. **He** wanted to kill Mwihaki *when* **she** was only five years of age.

Positives Negatives

-Place, Hernia secondary -Does not indicate time

-employing contrast and ample use of adjectives the student has

elaborated the protagonists' character traits

(tall, light, beautiful, bright, well-behaved wealthy, social, loving,

popular, few).

-Description has also been used- (an only child)

-Pronominal use to enhance cohesion (she, her, they).

The orientation does not specifically give an indication of time or place, although Hernia secondary school has been mentioned, and one would have to read further on to determine the setting of the narrative.

The orientation has very many character traits and character descriptions. These traits are seen in the adjectives- (tall, light, beautiful, bright, well behaved, wealthy, social, loving, popular, few, and only child). The abstract is seen in that the prompt has been coherently developed.

The writer has used pronouns extensively to enhance cohesion in the narrative content. This seems to suggest that the writer can write more confidently.

Line 12 and line 13 foreshadow the action in the narrative and starts of in suspense. The reader might wish to establish why anyone would want to kill such a pleasant character as Mwihaki.

The orientation in example 1.5 has been written economically, it is well planned and organized. At the linguistic level, the writer cleverly uses lexical repetition to enhance coherence. The term 'child' in line 10 is repeated in line 11. The term 'family' in line 7 is repeated in lines 8 and 10. This term is collocated in line 12 by the use of 'father', and also collocated in the earlier reference to 'child'. The term 'murder' in line 12 collocates with 'kill' in line 13. This orientation is coherent and interesting.

Posttest

Example 1.6 below is also used to demonstrate the use of character traits in the posttest narratives written by students in the experimental group.

An orientation from the experimental group (ID 1Y 37)

Example 1.8 Story no 268.

1. In a crowd, she was unnoticeable because she looked so ordinary, like so many others.
2. But in every other aspect, Mwihaki was different from the rest of the students in Chinga Girls High School.
3. Mwihaki was a *tall* and *slender* girl with *long* hair and *pink* lips, and a *beautiful* round face.
4. Mwihaki was not only *famous* for her *beauty* but for her *Bad* Character and *Rudeness* to the teachers in school.
5. The whole student body did not want to be on her wrong side **since** she was *high tempered* and in case you did something wrong to her she would fight you and injure you.
6. Of course even ***if*** you she was punished she would laugh and say, "I am immune to punishment".

Positives Negatives

- a series of adjectives to describe the protagonists character traits

(tall and slender, long hair, pink lips, a beautiful

round face, -line 3)

- she is also said not only to be 'famous for her beauty'

but also for 'her bad character'.

She is also said to be 'rude to teachers'-line 4 and 'high tempered' -line5

- the student also uses direct speech for emphasis- line 6

-this orientation also has two causals 'since' and 'if'

Owing to space limitations, only the orientation is used to demonstrate the change in coherence, elaboration and narrative structure in the experimental group.

Tentative observations

- After the intervention most students in the experimental groups appear to have written coherent narratives that had elaborate orientations including the use of character traits.

- Characterization was further elaborated in the main event and in the conflict resolution.

Example Story no. 268

- The narratives have a clear structure and a theme or themes.

Example: Story No. 497

- Ideas introduced cohere and exhibit chaining.

Example: Story no 245

- Students seem confident in their writing. They also use economical and mature language.

Example: Story no. 154

The next section examines the development of the main conflict in the narratives.

1.4 The main conflict/Main event

Poor narrators may present settings that are not necessarily related to the action that follows in the narrative. This seems to produce incoherent narratives. Such narratives are a series of events that seem to lack chains that bind them together. On the other hand good narrators introduce ideas that run through a narrative holding the narrative together to the end.

Narratives whose events bear a temporal-causal relationship have been rated as much better narratives than those that only possess temporality (Nelson, 1986; Berman, 1988; Berman and Slobin, 1994). The use of causal conjunctions allows a narrator to provide a motive or a reason for an action. Most narratives written after the intervention have events that are explained by providing reasons for them. This is shown by the frequent use of causal connectives such as 'since', 'so' and 'because' as shown in (f) below. Other causal connectives include 'if', 'consequently', and 'therefore'.

In posttest narratives, some writers have used adversatives to provide goals, purposes or reasons to explain the action in the narrative and additives to indicate forward movement in a narrative. An example is provided in 1.9 below

Example 1.9 Story no. 216

1. Helter skelter I ran in the house *and* told my mother
2. *but* due to how I was frightened she was unable to understand what I meant.
3. I went to the bed *and* started crying.
4. Better pray than cry *because* crying will not help you.
5. I was wondering why God could only let my grandmother whom I love to have a serious illness.
6. During lunch time my mother went to my grandmother *and* see how she was struggling.
7. She called the neighbours *and* she was taken to hospital.

In example 1.9 above the writer has used the additive –*and*, the adversative –*but*, and the causal –*because*

to assist the narrative advance in time and show causality of events.

At the close of the narrative, there is an increased use a variety of conjunctives as seen in example 1.10 below- It is the last part of story no. 216

Example 1.10 Story no. 216

1.I saw the dead body which I hated seen it *and* I wished the ground would suddenly open up *and* swallow me.

2. *That* day I was finding a solution for my situation **but** it was all invain.

3. We went back home Sadly for our dear "cucu" (grandmother).

4.I was thinking *that* she will never die, **but** she died.

5. I thought *that* people would live for ever.

6.*When* the neighbours were telling me about her, tears were coming out uncontrollable.

8. I hate seeing the dead *because* I usually dream with them.
9. During the night I would dream about her.
10. *That* day, was a red letter day which I never forget even *if* the shadow of the moon crept upon my face.
11. Better late than never *because if* my mother could not have dead I could not know how the dead person look like.

Multiple episodes

When presenting more than one episode in a narrative, such episodes could be linear or embedded. Episodes are embedded when the close of one episode forms the beginning of another. A linear presentation of episodes is considered easy to present, since children as young as five have been shown to have such ability (Berman and Slobin 1994; Nelson 1986). To produce narratives with embedded episodes requires skill and maturity in narrative writing (Kroll and Anson, 1984).

- Narratives written after the intervention demonstrate students' ability to write narratives with multiple episodes most of whose ideas are coherent and are chained.

Example Story no. 497

Language

- Narratives written by the experimental group tend to use temporal-causal conjunctions to explain events and the action of the characters. This seems to agree with related research (Trabasso et al. 1984: Berman and Slobin, 1994).

- Students use contrast to develop characterization. That way, students learn to use complex sentences.

Example Story no. 154

- Writers use numerous adjectives to describe characters.
- The use a variety of pronouns to refer back to the characters in the narrative enhances cohesion in the narratives written in English

Structure has features of order and connectedness, both of which should reflect and contribute to coherence in narrative (Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1986). If organization and coherence are related, improving children's knowledge of structure or organization in text might improve overall story coherence in children's written narratives.

The main event and the closure will be discussed together

1Y 29 story no. 239 Pretest

The main event

1. The day finally came and I was all tensed up.
2. The teachers hadn't noticed by poem compositions so I didn't see how they would be impressed.
3. The ceremony had now commenced and the District Officer had arrived.
4. I herd my name being called to the stage.
5. As I walked to the stage I took each step carefully and in confidence.
6. I opened mouth to recite the poem and suddenly I gained courage and I hadn't ever before recited a poem so well.
7. After I was through, claps and shouts of applause were heard from the audience.
8. The media who had availed themselves took pictures of me.
9. Everything went well for the rest of the ceremony and the District Officer who was immensely impressed said that he would like to see me after the ceremony was over.

Closure

10. After it was over, he told me that he was going to attend a function with the country's president and that he wanted be to entertain them with a poem.
11. He had never heard me recite a poem before and he was asking me to do it.
12. I jumped at the opportunity.
13. The president too was impressed and my name was in all the newspaper.
14. My dream was coming true.

15. The president asked me to be accompanying in his functions to recite my poems and I agreed to it.

16. He was always overseas and that meant I was their.

17. It was all so much fun.

18. One day as he was going to America for a function and America's President who was a poem lover was impressed by my composition.

19. And there he stood infront of me.

Positive Negative

The problem is that the protagonist has no obstacle

She is invited to recite a poem, and she does so well.

Nb "Stories are usually about a character or a group of characters overcoming problems or obstacles" (Feez and Joyce 1998 p.24)

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